

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

201729Z Feb 06

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LAGOS 000252

SIPDIS

STATE PASS DOE FOR DAS JBRODMAN AND CGAY
TREASURY FOR ASEVERENS AND SRENENDER
COMMERCE FOR KBURRESS
STATE PASS TRANSPORTATION FOR MARAD
STATE PASS USAID FOR GWEYNAND AND SLAWAETZ
STATE FOR DS/IP/AF, AF/EX, DS/IP/OPO, DS/ICI/PII, DS/DSS/ITA
LONDON PASS TO AMBASSADOR CAMPBELL

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/19/2016

TAGS: [EPET](#) [PGOV](#) [ASEC](#) [PTER](#) [KHLs](#) [PINR](#) [ETRD](#) [CASC](#) [NI](#)
SUBJECT: NIGERIA: HOSTAGE-TAKING, SITREP #4

REF: A. LAGOS 251 AND PREVIOUS

[1](#)B. 2/20/06 EMAIL MURAD - OPCENTER

Classified By: Consul General Brian L. Browne for Reasons 1.4 (D & E)

Hostage Welfare Update

[1](#)1. (C) Nigerian Government officials and NGO officials in contact with the kidnappers report that, according to the hostage takers, the hostages are healthy and unharmed. As with the January hostage crisis, Shell is hosting a daily meeting that includes Shell, Willbros, British High Commission and US Consulate staff. Willbros sent medicine (including insulin for AmCit Macon Hawkins) through a Nigerian State Security Service contact for delivery to the hostages on Saturday. Shell and Willbros are sending an additional supply tonight through an assistant of Delta State Governor Ibori, who heads the GON negotiating team.

[1](#)2. (C) Willbros executives met Consulate staff. Willbros provided a copy of three email messages purportedly posted by MEND to the [www.willbros.com](#) web page directing Willbros to open dialogue to discuss conditions for the hostages' release (ref B). Willbros is working with Control Risk Group consultants and FBI hostage experts in Washington to compose a response to the messages. Willbros has contacted families of the American, British and Filipino hostages, and is working to contact the families of the other hostages. Willbros will contact Thai, Egyptian, and Philippine governments and Shell will invite them to participate in the daily crisis group meetings. The Legatt is attempting to help Willbros with their request for victim's counseling for the other employees who were on the barge when the nine were taken hostage.

[1](#)3. (C) As expected we are receiving conflicting statements regarding the kidnapper intentions toward the hostages. MEND reportedly released a statement claiming the hostages are in good condition but threatening their execution. However, Timi Alaibe, Executive Director for Finance and Administration of the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC), told us he had been in telephone contact with the kidnappers who said the hostages will not be harmed. The kidnapping was a reaction to Federal government military activity against the militants. The militants told Alaibe the hostages will be held until aggressive military action has ceased and the Federal government opens negotiations with the militants about socio-economic conditions in the Delta.

[1](#)4. (C) NGO activist Judy Asuni reports the hostages are fine and are being held at Government Ekpemupolo's headquarters in Nkerenkoko but have not been given food or water. Anger over Nigerian military attacks has caused some debate about the quality of treatment to give the hostages, and provisions are in short supply, Asuni was told. Asuni has identified intermediaries who are willing to take food, water, and medicine to the hostages.

[1](#)5. (C/NF) Delta Governor Ibori said that he has been in contact with the kidnappers. He told us the kidnappers said they would not harm the nine, minatory public statements notwithstanding. In addition to the medicines sent, Ibori claimed the kidnappers had access to adequate food supplies. He said the kidnappers were incensed at Shell and the GON and had purposely not targeted Chevron. Their grouse with the GON is two-fold. The immediate proximate complaint is the attacks the GON launched last week near Nkerenkoko. The greater complaint is GON protracted indifference to economic development in the Delta. Their ire was directed at Shell because it was a British company and they were angry at the British for what they perceived as the UK's role in the downfall of former Bayelsa Governor Alamieyeseigha. Ibori said the militants would need some assurance their grievance

would be aired prior to agreeing to release the hostages. As part of this process, and after talking to President Obasanjo, he planned on releasing a press statement about his contact with the kidnappers, including their demands.

16. (C) A Rivers State government source told us about Delta contacts who had discussions with the kidnappers. She said the hostages are being held on a small island called Ikula between Delta and Bayelsa States and an intermediary will meet the kidnappers again tonight or tomorrow to attempt to identify terms of release. (Comment: As we witnessed in January, there will be multiple lines of communication. Also, some people will falsely claim to have access but will not. Thus, we will receive conflicting information from various sources. However, what we can distill from these various contacts is that the kidnappers will be even tougher to deal with than in January. End comment.)

Energy Update: New MEND Threats to Oil Companies

17. (C) The Shell Forcados terminal and "Sea Eagle" FPSO remain closed, and production remains reduced by approximately 500,000 bpd.

18. (C) An oil service company source told us MEND issued a new statement threatening to attack offices in the area within the week unless they are vacated. There are unconfirmed reports of additional attacks on a Shell pipeline and a houseboat near Forcados. Shell representatives told us the January 18 pipeline attacks displayed detailed knowledge of Shell operations. Shell also said there were new threats on tankers as well as the FPSO "Sea Eagle."

Military Activity; Active Patrols

19. (C) The Nigerian military continues patrolling the area with boats and aircraft.
BROWNE